

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, IS, JO
SUBJECT: NEW MILGOV VISITS NABLUS

REF: JERUSALEM 1623 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY: IN A RELATIVELY AMICABLE VISIT TO NABLUS,
THE NEW WEST BANK MILGOV MET WITH BOTH OFFICIALS OF THE
MUNICIPALITY OF OUTSPOKEN PLO-SUPPORTER MAYOR BASSAM SHAKA'
AND THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, A BASTION OF THE TRADITIONAL LEADER-
SHIP. THE SAMARITANS WERE ALSO VISITED. THE MILGOV REPORTEDLY
WILL APPROVE IMPORTATION OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT, BUT
INSISTS NABLUS ALSO BE CONNECTED WITH ISRAELI POWER
GRID; HE WILL ALLOW ARAB WELLS TO BE IMPROVED, BUT
WILL HAVE ADDITIONAL WATER COME FROM ISRAELI WELLS; HE WILL
PERMIT TRANSFERS OF SOME FUNDS FROM THE ARAB STATES, BUT
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RETAINS STRICT CONTROL IN GENERAL. MAYOR SHAKA' CHARACTER-
IZED THE ENCOUNTER AS GENERALLY NEGATIVE, BUT NOT BAD FOR
A FIRST MEETING. END SUMMARY

1. GENERAL BEN ELEIZER AND STAFF VISITED NABLUS JUNE 19
AND HAD RELATIVELY AMICABLE MEETINGS WITH THE MUNICIPALITY,
THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE SAMARITANS. THE

ARAB PRESS HAS CARRIED DETAILED REPORTS WHICH WE HAVE CONFIRMED WITH THE MAYOR. MAYOR BASSAM SHAKA', WELCOMED THE VISIT AS THE FIRST BY A MILITARY GOVERNOR GENERAL IN A YEAR AND A HALF. AS WITH OTHER CITY COUNCILS, THE MILGOV HEARD A LONG LIST OF REQUESTS SOME OF WHICH HE GRANTED, MOST OF WHICH HE PROMISTED TO STUDY.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ISSUES DISCUSSED WERE:

(A) ELECTRICITY: THE MILGOV APPROVED IMPORTATION OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT, ONE 4.5 MEGAWATT GENERATOR ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, TO EXPAND THE MUNICIPALITY'S GENERATING CAPACITY. AT THE SAME TIME, BEN ELIEZER INSISTED THAT NABLUS BE LINKED TO THE ISRAELI POWER GRID. THE MAYOR TELLS US HE WILL AWAIT FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS, BUT IS LOATHE TO COMPROMISE THE MUNICIPALITY'S RIGHT TO FURNISH POWER BY ACCEPTING ANY ISRAELI POWER.

(B) WATER: THE MILGOV APPROVED DEEPENING AN EXISTING ARAB WELL AND IMPORTATION OF GENERATORS FOR MORE POWERFUL PUMPS. ADDITIONAL WATER, AS NEEDED, WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FROM ISRAELI WELLS AT BAYT IBA.

(C) FUNDS: THE MILGOV APPROVED TRANSFER OF JD220,000 FROM AMMAN OF THE FUNDS COLLECTED BY SHAKA' IN THE ARAB STATES. GENERAL APPROVAL, HOWEVER, WAS RESERVED. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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2. INTERESTINGLY, THE MEETING WITH THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WAS ATTENDED BY PROMINENT FORMER CITY COUNCILLORS HAJ MA'ZUZ AS MASRI AND ADEL SHAKA'. DISCUSSION FOCUSED ON TAXES (ESPECIALLY THE V.A.T.), CUSTOM DUTIES AND EXPORTATION OF COMMODITIES TO JORDAN. WHILE SYMPATHETIC, THE MILGOV DID NOT CHANGE SIGNIFICANTLY EXISTING POLICIES.

3. THE SMARAITANS, WHO PROFESS A DISTINCTIVE VARIANT OF JUDAISM WHILE BEING ARAB IN CULTURE, WERE PAID A SPECIAL VISIT BY THE MILGOV. ACCORDING TO AL QUDS, THE SECT'S LEADERS WELCOMED THE MILGOV, BUT PUBLICLY STRESSED THEIR TOTAL SOLIDARITY WITH NABLUS' ARAB POPULATION.

4. COMMENT: WHILE EXHIBITING SOME FLEXIBILITY IN SENSITIVE MATTERS SUCH AS ELECTRICITY, WATER AND FUNDS, THE MILGOV HAS NOT YET ABANDONED HIS PREDECESSOR'S PREFERENCE FOR CLOSER PHYSICAL LINKS BETWEEN NABLUS AND ISRAEL NOR CONTROL OF MUNICIPAL FINANCING. NOR IS HE ABANDONING THE ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP OF THE PATRIARCHS OF NABLUS' CLANS. DETENTE IN NABLUS IS DIALOGUE, NOT YET COOPERATION. SHAKA'

TOLD US HE FOUND THE MILGOV'S ATTITUDE NEGATIVE, BUT
ADDED, WITH CONSUMATE REALISM, THAT THINGS HAD NOT GONE
BADLY FOR A FIRST MEETING.
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